

God's Special Concern For

~~God's Special Concern~~
His People
~~His People~~



Dallas Burdette

April 10, 1999

Thrust Statement: God wants His people to shine as lights in the world.

Scripture Reading: [Philippians 2:14-16a](#)

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that

I did not run or labor for nothing ([Philippians 2:14-16](#)).^[1]

Paul is continuing the development of his thoughts from [verses 12](#) and [13](#). He wants the Philippians to work out their salvation with fear and trembling ([verse 12](#)). It is God who initiated this whole movement of salvation so that the Philippians could be forgiven. It is God who inaugurated this salvation so that we may be saved and redeemed. God is concerned about Dallas Burdette; He is concerned about Will and Pam Oldfield; He is concerned about Paul and Rhonda Otto; He is concerned about T.J. and Donna Hughes; He is concerned about Lori Barnes; He is concerned about Dennis and Nikki Smith; He is concerned about Carolyn Ash; yes, God is concerned about everyone that is here today. God is concerned about our sanctification. It is God working in you “to will and to act according to his good purpose” ([Philippians 2:14](#)). He is concerned about your soul and mine. God is holding on to you, and He will go on working in you until you have arrived at that state for which He destined you.

Are there any here today who have turned away from God? Are there any here today who have “tasted the heavenly gift” ([Hebrews 6:4](#))? Are there any here today who have “shared in the Holy Spirit ([6:4](#))”? Are there any here today that have “tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age” ([6:5](#))? My question now is, have you turned away from all this goodness of God? If so, my prayer is that you will

confess your sins and repent. Remember the words of John:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world (**1 John 2:1-2**).

Your negligence did not come overnight. Generally, one's digression back into sin is something that happens gradually. Perhaps it starts with missing a Sunday night service; then a Wednesday night Bible study; and, finally, a Sunday morning gathering. Perhaps your downfall started when you ceased reading the Word of God. If you are here today and are not right with God, my prayer is that you will remember the words of the Holy Spirit: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts" (**Hebrews 3:7,8**). God's invitation is extended to everyone. Listen to the words of John in the book of Revelation:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life (**Revelation 22:17**).

Have you forgotten that "You are the salt of the earth" (**Matthew 5:13**)? Have you forgotten that "You are the light of the world" (**5:14**)? Through Paul, the Holy Spirit is reminding the Philippians that they are to "shine like stars in the universe" (**Philippians 2:15**). How does this shining occur? Listen again as the Holy Spirit speaks about the believers' activity in His service: "as you hold out the word of life" (**2:16**). Are you holding out the word of life? Is your light under a bowl? Or is your light on a stand so that it may give light to everyone in the house (**Matthew 5:15**). God's people are to let their light shine so that people "may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (**5:16**).

WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION

Not only does Paul tell the Philippians what to do, but he also tells them what to avoid. He appeals for Christian conduct. Paul's immediate purpose here is to exhort them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. Many can work out their salvation with fear and trembling as long as things are going well, but what happens to this fear and trembling if things unpleasant happen to us? How do we react toward God's grace? Have you lost a loved one? Have you lost a job? Have you lost a husband or wife through divorce? Have you lost your home? Have you lost your good health? If so, how do you react toward the one who sent His Son to die for you?

Paul's immediate purpose is to exhort the Philippians to work out their salvation without "complaining or arguing" (**2:14**). Even though they were undergoing many conflicts, nevertheless, he says,

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have (**1:27-30**).

Paul puts all of this in terms of their status before God. Since they are “children of God,” he lets them know that this is the central thing in his exhortation to them. He writes:

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me (2:14-18).

The implication of these Scriptures is: because you are a Christian, then these are the things you must remember and put into practice. As children of God, God’s people must not complain as a result of adverse circumstances in life. Not only are God’s children not to complain or argue but they are also to maintain purity in their lives. One cannot divorce Christian ethics and morality from the only basis from which ethics and morality derive. One cannot separate God and ethics. One of the reasons that Paul assigns for not complaining and arguing is that God’s people “may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe” (2:15-16).

Christians are different! Are you different? Christians are to be different because they are children of God. We read about one being born of the Spirit, one receiving the Spirit, one being regenerated, one being born again, or being created anew. Yes, every Christian receives something of the divine nature. It is in this vein that Peter says, For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Since we, as Christians, are redeemed, then Peter exhorts a change in our life style:

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (2:1-3).

We are to do what God asks us to do. “Do everything without complaining or arguing” (Philippians 2:14) takes us back to verses 12-13. Every believer should commit to memory the words of Paul in verse 13: “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” “Without complaining” is a striking statement. One cannot but help reflect upon the history of Israel, especially their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Paul did not cite Psalms 106, which is a history of Israel, but this verse (14) is reminiscent of this history by the Psalmist. Paul is saying in effect that the Christian life, too, is a pilgrimage. Paul is saying in effect that you will find as the Children of Israel did that God sometimes puts His people in places that they do not like. In other words, there may be days in which you do not have water to quench your thirst; there may be day in which your food will not be very pleasing; there may be days in which your enemy confronts you.

In your walk with God, I remind each of you that it is God working in you, both to will and to do. He is leading you and perfecting you in the process. There may be times in

which you will say, “Why me, Lord?” When we complain we doubt. Complaining is indicative of a lack of faith. It leads to poor testimony; it brings disgrace upon the Christian name. To sum up our message today, I remind each of you of the trials that Jesus endured without complaint:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart ([Hebrews 12:1-3](#)).

Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)), but He did not grumble or complain. He responded to the various temptations by citing Scripture. You remember the accounts that record the Gethsemane episode. Even though God led Him to Gethsemane, he never complained ([26:36-56](#)). No wonder Paul reminded the Philippians: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” ([Philippians 2:5](#)).

It is God who initiated this whole movement of salvation so that we may be forgiven, saved, and redeemed. God wants sanctification for us. First of all, He sent Jesus in order that there may be a people sanctified: “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” ([1 Corinthians 1:30](#)). The King James Version employs the word “sanctification” rather than the word “holiness.” In Jesus one is holy because Jesus is holy. Jesus is our “righteousness, holiness and redemption.” Even though one is holy in Jesus, there is still what may be called progressive sanctification. In other words, every believer is continuously doing what Paul expresses to the Philippians:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body ([Philippians 3:12-21](#)).

God is holding on to you, and He will go on working in you until you have arrived at that state for which He has destined you. I encourage each of you to “stand firm in the

Lord” (4:1).

**Message Delivered
at the Following
Congregations**

Oakwood Hills Church of Christ
DeFuniak Springs, FL
Date: 4-11-1999
Time: 11 am
Responses:
Present:

On the 14th day of April 1999, Mike O'Brian and David Starkey requested baptism. Dennis Smith, one of the leaders in the Oakwood Hills Church, baptized both of these men. Mike meets with the Oakwood Hills Church as a result of the evangelism of Leyda Lewis. David Starkey meets with the Oakwood Hills Church as a result of the evangelism of Will Oldfield.

Both Leyda and Will are seeking to fulfill the Great Commission issued by Jesus to His disciples ([Matthew 28: 18-20](#)). The Great Commission is no doubt what Paul had in mind when he wrote his second letter to Corinth:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God ([2 Corinthians 5:17-20](#)).

[1] All Scripture citations are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984, unless stated otherwise.